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Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

Report of the Secretary-General

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–2	2
II.	Replies received from States	3–52	2
	A. Algeria	3–30	2
	B. Holy See	31	6
	C. Mexico	32–34	7
	D. Slovenia	35–48	7
	E. Venezuela	49–52	10
III.	Replies received from intergovernmental organizations	53–59	11
	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe	53–59	11

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I. Introduction

1. On 22 November 2002, the General Assembly adopted resolution 57/99, by which it called upon all States of the Mediterranean region that had not yet done so to adhere to all the multilaterally negotiated legal instruments related to the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, thus creating the necessary conditions for strengthening peace and cooperation in the region, and encouraged all States of the region to favour the necessary conditions for strengthening the confidence-building measures among them by promoting genuine openness and transparency on all military matters, by participating in the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures and by providing accurate data and information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The Assembly also encouraged the Mediterranean countries to strengthen further their cooperation in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and in combating international crime and illicit arms transfers and illicit drug production, consumption and trafficking, which posed a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the region and therefore to the improvement of the current political, economic and social situation and which jeopardized friendly relations among States, hindered the development of international cooperation and resulted in the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the democratic basis of pluralistic society. Furthermore the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on means to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request and is based on information received from States and intergovernmental organizations.

2. In this connection, a note verbale dated 7 March 2003 was sent to States and relevant intergovernmental organizations requesting their views. The replies received are reproduced in sections II and III below. Any further replies received will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from States

A. Algeria

[Original: French]
[25April 2003]

3. Algeria fully supports the objectives and activities contemplated by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/99. In that connection, Algeria has spared no effort in translating into action the aims of the resolution, notably through diplomatic efforts in the areas described below.

Political and security partnership

4. Algeria has always believed that security in the Mediterranean region and security in Europe are inseparable and require a comprehensive and balanced approach. That approach needs to take into account the legitimate interests of all parties in the Euro-Mediterranean area, whose main objective is to bring peace and security for all and to build shared prosperity in the interests of all the peoples of the region.

5. This has been the thinking behind Algeria's diplomatic activities in regional forums such as the Barcelona process, the Mediterranean Forum, the Five Plus Five framework and the partnership with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), with an emphasis on the common interest in consolidating peace and security in the Euro-Mediterranean area and in cooperating through permanent and constructive dialogue to build a genuine partnership.

6. In considering all the concerns of the Mediterranean region, the Barcelona process has laid the foundation for a new relationship between the two sides of the Mediterranean, one based on partnership and common interest. The various conferences held as part of the Barcelona process provided a strong political stimulus to the Euro-Mediterranean relationship by giving it a comprehensive, balanced and multidimensional approach based on the necessary balance between the three parts of the Barcelona Declaration (political and security partnership, economic and financial partnership and partnership in social, cultural and human affairs).

7. Joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Mediterranean Dialogue was also a strategic choice for Algeria, reflecting the priority it attaches to strengthening cooperation within the Mediterranean region to prevent conflict and bring peace and stability.

8. This dialogue with NATO is all the more valuable to a very sensitive region because it addresses an important dimension of the Barcelona process: measures to build security and confidence. That dimension has been prevented from developing to any significant degree by the Middle East conflict.

9. Algeria welcomes the adoption by the NATO summit held in Prague of a paper entitled "Upgrading the Mediterranean Dialogue, including an inventory of possible areas of cooperation", as it provides new opportunities for cooperation between NATO and the countries of the Mediterranean in political, strategic and civil matters.

10. Algeria has also made active diplomatic efforts within the Five Plus Five framework and the Mediterranean Forum, which provide opportunities for useful and relevant regional discussions on a permanent basis. Because they are informal and flexible, these cooperation mechanisms serve as a think tank to drive forward the pursuit of stability and security in the region by various means, including new confidence-building measures to strengthen dialogue and consultation between the member countries.

Economic and financial partnership

11. Economic and financial cooperation is an important building block of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership: the aims are to speed up the economic development of the countries of the southern Mediterranean so as to narrow the gap between them and the advanced countries of the North and to encourage South-South integration to establish an area of peace, security and stability in the Mediterranean.

12. On 22 April 2002, in Madrid, Algeria and the European Union signed an association agreement that provides an updated and forward-looking framework for cooperation and demonstrates the commitment and willingness of the two parties to establish strong and lasting cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

13. Against that background, Algeria is encouraging all initiatives to strengthen Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, particularly those aimed at developing the western Mediterranean, which has more certain prospects for integration and interaction. In that connection, Algeria is seeking economic and financial support from the European Union to encourage advanced cooperation between the countries of the Arab Maghreb Union and the European States of the northern Mediterranean.

14. Algeria is convinced that the economic and financial partnership launched by the Barcelona process plays an important role in narrowing the development gap between the northern and southern Mediterranean regions and urges its European partners to give the Barcelona process the financial resources it needs to match the objectives it has set for itself, first and foremost by strengthening the financing provisions of the MEDA II programme, the principal financial instrument of the European Union for the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership for the period 2000-2006. It also advocates the promotion of foreign direct investment and its equitable distribution among the countries of the region.

15. Algeria also welcomes the establishment of the Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership, which is a first step in reviving economic growth, but it remains convinced that the plan to set up a Euro-Mediterranean Investment Bank is the best way to meet the huge financing needs generated by the task of ensuring that the economies of the countries of the southern Mediterranean develop and catch up.

16. Algeria also calls for a review of the debt issue with a view to debt cancellation and relief, including for middle-income countries, and the possibility of debt-equity swaps. The aim is to establish new economic relations and promote a genuine and lasting partnership for development as the background for creating an area of shared prosperity in the Mediterranean.

Partnership in social, cultural and human affairs

17. With respect to social, cultural and human affairs, Algeria considers that the human dimension is at the heart of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, and its inclusion in the Barcelona process reflects the aspiration of the peoples of the region to live together in a climate of peace and community and their deep desire to act to further that ideal by establishing a calm and fruitful dialogue founded on the richness of their cultural diversity and the greatness of their shared heritage.

18. Algeria has a substantial and settled community in Europe and justifiably believes that genuine Euro-Mediterranean partnership cannot be confined to a free-trade area for goods and services but excluding the movement of people. In that connection, Algeria is working to overcome the lack of understanding between the two sides of the Mediterranean regarding the movement of people and to promote a fruitful and constructive dialogue on that matter.

19. Algeria accordingly welcomes the progress that has led to the establishment of the Justice and Home Affairs component of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation to promote assistance in judicial matters, in migration and in combating undesirable transnational phenomena. It has contributed substantially to that cooperation and is working with determination to implement it on the ground.

Strengthening international and regional peace and security

20. Algeria believes that the establishment of confidence-building measures to strengthen peace and security in the Mediterranean region and throughout the world must be based on just and lasting solutions to conflicts, respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the peaceful settlement of disputes and concrete, effective disarmament measures, including the accession of all States of the region to the multilateral agreements banning nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction (such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention) and the submission of all their nuclear installations to inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

21. Transparency in armaments is another valuable tool for creating a climate of confidence in the Mediterranean region. It should also be aimed at preventing the destabilizing accumulation of weapons of all types. Algeria, while recognizing the importance of these objectives, considers that national sovereignty and the right of States to preserve their security and to enjoy undiminished security are also important. Measures to enhance transparency must be consensual, non-discriminatory and complete.

22. At a time when the eastern part of the Euro-Mediterranean region is facing violence and war, littoral States must demonstrate shared political will to take up common challenges in a spirit of solidarity through respect for the principles enshrined in international law, especially those of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, the non-use of force or the threat of force and respect for sovereignty. This would help to strengthen democracy, consolidate the rule of law and eliminate new types of threats to peace and security, in particular the scourge of terrorism and transnational organized crime.

23. Algeria remains committed to the Middle East peace process and to the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region. The advent of this peace can only strengthen security and stability in the Mediterranean, to the benefit of all the peoples of the region.

24. Algeria condemns the blocking of the peace process through the policy of violence practised by the State of Israel against the Palestinian people and its legitimate leadership and remains convinced that the Palestinian issue can be settled only by implementing the Arab peace plan adopted by the Beirut Arab Summit in March 2002 and accepted unanimously by the international community as an instrument for peace and for regional concord and by establishing a Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Combating international terrorism and organized crime

25. Another area considered a priority for all the partners involved in the Mediterranean forums is combating terrorism, which has become a worldwide danger since the tragic events of 11 September and thus a threat to international peace and security.

26. Algeria remains in the forefront of the worldwide effort to combat this threat and has worked at the regional and international levels to draw up the major international counter-terrorism conventions. Algeria spent more than a decade

fighting this transnational scourge alone, and has therefore contributed to the stability of the Mediterranean region.

27. Algeria is proud to have played a part in making the prevention and repression of terrorism part of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and is continuing to fulfil its role and contribute its experience to the international community's efforts to eliminate this transnational scourge completely.

28. Algeria is a major participant in the implementation of the plans of action to counter transnational terrorism adopted by NATO, OSCE and the Mediterranean Forum; they are a considerable step forward in the process of eradicating that worldwide threat finally and completely.

29. The countries of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership have also focused on transnational organized crime, as it is one of the dangers that threatens the harmonious development of the countries of the South. Algeria has ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and cooperates with the Conference of Ministers of Western Mediterranean Countries to improve methods of preventing and fighting this scourge and countering international criminal networks.

30. Security and stability in the Mediterranean also depend on waging a constant battle against the trade in small arms and light weapons, which worsens conflicts and encourages terrorism and transnational crime. Algeria is aware of this danger, and has been making a permanent contribution to the international community's efforts to combat the phenomenon, thus consolidating the aims of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

B. Holy See

[Original: English]
[7 April 2003]

31. The Holy See adhered to the following six multilaterally negotiated legal instruments related to the field of disarmament and non-proliferation:

(a) Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, ratified 25 February 1971;

(b) Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, and its four Protocols, ratified 22 July 1997;

(c) Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, ratified 17 February 1998;

(d) Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, ratified 12 May 1999;

(e) Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, ratified 18 July 2001;

(f) Convention on the Prohibition of the of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, ratified 4 January 2002.

C. Mexico

[Original: Spanish]
[14 May 2003]

32. The Government of Mexico considers that the progress made in the areas of peace, security, stability and cooperation and in the social, economic and cultural development of the population of the Mediterranean region is closely linked to the developments in those areas at the global level and, more specifically, in the Middle East.

33. Mexico also takes the view that the accession of the Mediterranean States to the multilateral and regional instruments relating to disarmament and arms control and their compliance with those instruments are fundamental to the strengthening of security and cooperation in that region. Efforts to combat terrorism and transnational organized crime are also a critical part of that undertaking.

34. Lastly, the Mexican Government considers that the adoption and consolidation of measures to ensure transparency and confidence-building in both the military and non-military spheres is essential for the strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

D. Slovenia

[Original: English]
[3 June 2003]

35. The information submitted by the Republic of Slovenia pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/99 responds to paragraphs 5 to 7 of the resolution.

Information pursuant to paragraph 5

36. Slovenia is subject to all international instruments relating to disarmament and non-proliferation and endeavours to create the conditions necessary for the strengthening of peace and cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

37. With respect to applicable international instruments relating to disarmament and non-proliferation, the Slovenian army implements on a regular basis all international agreements, treaties, conventions and initiatives binding on the Republic of Slovenia and those which the army is responsible for implementing in full or in part.

38. Slovenia is also party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, including its amended Protocols II and IV.

39. Slovenia has also been implementing the relevant measures of transparency within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (Vienna document 1999, OSCE document on small arms and light weapons, Association of European Migration Institutions, Global Exchange of Military Information, Conventional

Arms and Military Expenditures Register and the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects).

40. Following is a review of regulations relating to the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation:

(a) Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, together with its Protocols I and III (Official Gazette RS-MP, No. 9/92);

(b) Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (Official Gazette RS-MP, No. 9/92);

(c) Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons (Official Gazette RS-MP, No. 9/97);

(d) Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Official Gazette RS-MP, No. 16/98);

(e) Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Identification (Official Gazette RS-MP, No. 9/2000);

(f) Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby Traps and Other Devices (Protocol II), as amended on 3 May 1996, annexed to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (Official Gazette RS-MP, No. 24/2002), and additional Protocol to the Convention (Protocol IV) (Official Gazette RS-MP, No. 24/2002).

Information pursuant to paragraph 6

41. The Ministry of Defence reports regularly on defence expenditure and submits accurate data and information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms on a yearly basis.

Information under paragraph 7

42. The current activities of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Slovenia in the Mediterranean region are aimed at European countries in particular. In addition to bilateral cooperation with the countries of the region, the Ministry has also been active within different organizations and initiatives, such as the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, the South-east European Cooperative Initiative, the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative and so on.

43. As a member State of the European Union (EU), Slovenia will also become a member of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona process) and will, where possible, participate in the activities in the security/political, economic, social and cultural fields.

44. In combating organized crime, the police force has implemented or implements two "twinning programmes", one with the Spanish police (currently under way) and the other with the Italian police (concluded in 2002).

45. Within the EU AGIS programme, the Ministry of the Interior has been planning cooperation between Slovenia and an appropriate Spanish unit active within the framework of the "Guardia Civil"; the aim of the project is to draw up a European programme of training of special units from EU member States.

46. The Ministry of the Interior has concluded agreements on cooperation in the field of combating organized crime and terrorism with Albania, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Serbia and Montenegro.

47. In addition, the Republic of Slovenia has concluded agreements with Croatia, Greece, Italy and Serbia and Montenegro on the readmission of persons who do not meet conditions for residence in the territories of the States parties to the agreement.

48. Following is a review of regulations relating to strengthening cooperation in combating all forms of terrorism and in the fight against organized crime and the illicit transfer of weapons and the manufacture, consumption and trafficking of drugs that pose a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the region:

(a) Succession: Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft; Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft (Official Gazette RS-MP, No. 9/92);

(b) Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation (Official Gazette RS-MP, No. 9/92);

(c) Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents (Official Gazette RS-MPJ, No. 9/92);

(d) International Convention against the Taking of Hostages; Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (Official Gazette M-MPJ, No. 9/92);

(e) Protocol on the Suppression of Unlawful Acts of Violence at Airports Serving International Civil Aviation supplementary to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation (Official Gazette No. 9/92);

(f) Act Ratifying the Arrangement between the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the Government of the Republic of Hungary on Cooperation in the Fight against Terrorism, Illicit Trafficking in Drugs and Organized Crime (Official Gazette RS-MP, No. 1/94);

(g) Act Ratifying the Arrangement between the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the Government of the Republic of Croatia in the Fight against Terrorism, Smuggling and Abuse of Drugs and against Organized Crime (Official Gazette RS-MP, No. 3/94);

(h) Act Ratifying the Arrangement between the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the Government of the Republic of Macedonia on Cooperation in the Fight against Terrorism, Illicit Trafficking in Drugs and Organized Crime (Official Gazette RS-MP, No. 18/94);

(i) Act Ratifying the Arrangement between the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the Government of the Republic of Albania on Cooperation in the Fight against Terrorism, Illicit Trafficking in Drugs and Organized Crime (Official Gazette RS-MP, No. 18/94);

(j) Act Ratifying the Arrangement between the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Slovenia and the Federal Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Austria on Cooperation in Suppressing International Organized Crime, International Illicit Drug Trafficking and International Terrorism (Official Gazette RS-MP, No. 4/96);

(k) Act Ratifying the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the Government of the Czech Republic on Cooperation in Suppressing Illicit Trafficking in Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and against Organized Crime and the Fight against Terrorism (Official Gazette M-MP, No. 9/99);

(l) Act Ratifying the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism (Official Gazette RS-MP, No. 27/2000);

(m) Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the Federal Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on Cooperation in the Fight against Organized Crime, Illicit Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors, Trafficking, Terrorism and Other Serious Crimes (Official Gazette RS-MP, No. 17/2001);

(n) Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the Government of Romania on Cooperation in Fighting against Organized Crime, Illicit Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors, Trafficking, Terrorism and Other Serious Crimes (Official Gazette RS-MP, No. 6/2001);

(o) Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria on Cooperation in the Fight against Organized Crime, Illicit Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors, Trafficking, Terrorism and Other Serious Crimes; (Official Gazette RS-MP, No. 25/2002 of 22 March 2002, International Treaties 7/2002);

(p) Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the Government of the Russian Federation Concerning Cooperation in the Fight against Organized Crime, Illicit Drug Trafficking, Terrorism and Other Forms of Crime (Official Gazette RS-UP, No. 90/3301 of 15 November 2001, International Treaties No. 26/2001);

(q) Declaration on the Joint Fight against Terrorism (Official Gazette RS-MP, No. 82/2001).

E. Venezuela

[Original: Spanish]
[5 June 2003]

49. In connection with General Assembly resolution 57/99, the Government of Venezuela concurs with that resolution when it highlights the importance for all States of the Mediterranean region to adhere to all the multilaterally negotiated legal instruments related to the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, for this would create a lawful and reliable framework for action.

50. Furthermore, as it has stated in a number of subregional, regional and multilateral forums, Venezuela agrees, as indicated in the resolution, that a multidimensional approach to security must be taken, given the emergence of

different types of threats with a multidimensional scope; although, at the same time, the classical concept of security based on defence against external aggression should not be set aside.

51. The Mediterranean region has to take into consideration the new, non-traditional threats that are present in contemporary society, among them problems having to do with the economy, social issues, health and the environment, extreme poverty, terrorism, drug trafficking and organized international crime.

52. In taking on these challenges, it is imperative to rely on multilateral cooperation in the various areas, this being the only possible means of successfully achieving the ultimate objective of removing from the face of the earth problems such as these, which weaken the security of States.

III. Replies received from intergovernmental organizations

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

[Original: English]
[25 April 2003]

53. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe currently conducts relations with six Mediterranean partners for cooperation within the framework of the Mediterranean Dialogue, which goes back to the beginning of the Helsinki process.

54. In the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, participating States included a Mediterranean chapter in which they stated their conviction that "security in Europe ... is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean as a whole and that accordingly the process of improving security should not be confined to Europe but should extend to other parts of the world, and in particular to the Mediterranean area". The linkage between security in Europe and in the Mediterranean region has been underscored time and again in subsequent documents of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and OSCE.

55. OSCE events in which Mediterranean partners participate include summits, ministerial council meetings, high-level meetings with the OSCE Troika and review conferences, as well as other meetings and joint activities, such as the informal Mediterranean Contact Group and annual seminars.

56. The meetings of the informal Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation, which have convened since 1995, provide an opportunity for participating States and the six Mediterranean Partners to facilitate the interchange of information of mutual interest and the generation of ideas. This year, the Contact Group is under the chairmanship of Bulgaria, as the incoming member of the OSCE Troika. Subjects under discussion include issues related to all three dimensions of the Organization's comprehensive approach to security — the politico-military, the economic and environmental, and the human dimensions — for example, its activities in field missions, confidence-building measures, freedom of the media and so on.

57. In the spirit of the Platform for Cooperative Security, which sets out the importance of complementarity and coordination with other international organizations, the OSCE Mediterranean Dialogue complements that of other organizations promoting partnership with Mediterranean Partners.

58. There are a number of activities in which the Mediterranean Partners can participate: existing provisions provide for partners to send observers to electoral missions of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and to second, on a voluntary basis, mission members to OSCE field missions.

59. Currently, OSCE is conducting an outreach programme for Mediterranean Partner States at their request. This involves training sessions and briefings on subjects of the partners' choice in which OSCE has gained extensive experience.